

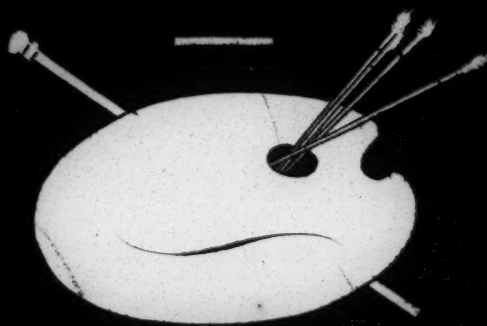
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REMARKS
on
RURAL SCENERY,
With twenty etchings of COTTAGES,
from Nature;
and
some observations and precepts
relative to the picturesque.

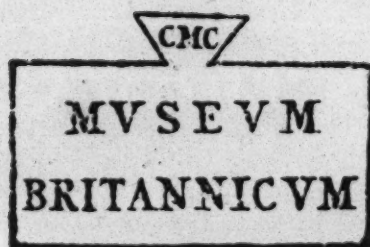
BY JOHN THOMAS SMITH,
Engraver of the Antiquities of LONDON.



LONDON June MDCCXCVII

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ADVERTISEMENT.

IN the course of my little reading, I have too frequently observed prefaces, promising information which the reader hath never been able to find, and dedications in which the dedicator hath extolled the dedicatee for virtues which not only did not exist in that particular instance, but could hardly have existed in any other: I am afraid therefore, that these prefaces and dedications cannot be considered as very creditable on either side; and shall accordingly offer these slight memorials to the public, not, I trust, without that deference and respect which becomes so humble a claimant on it's attention, but without either of the ceremonies in question; and instead of pretending to disclaim all views of vanity or of interest—(points on which, in my humble opinion, no author ought to be believed)—freely acknowledge that I hope, in however small a degree, both to please my reader, and benefit myself:

“IF—(to use the language of Mr. Walpole)—some parts of
“this work are more accurate than my own ignorance or carelessness
“would have left them, I must insist upon telling the world that I am in-
“debted for that advantage to my friend MR. CRANCH, who obligingly
“condescended to correct, what he could not have descended to write.”

I take this opportunity to return my very sincere thanks to the Ladies and Gentlemen whose subscriptions have encouraged this publication; in particular to MR. WYATT, of Egham, for his goodness to me on this and many other occasions.

JOHN THOMAS SMITH.

No. 40, Frith Street, Soho;

3d of July, 1797.

R E M A R K S

O N

RURAL SCENERY.

OF VARIOUS FEATURES AND SPECIFIC BEAUTIES
IN COTTAGE SCENERY.

OF all picturesque subjects, the *English cottage* seems to have obtained the least share of particular notice and appropriate discriminations by modern *tourists*: Palaces, castles, churches, monastic ruins, and the remains, and even vestiges and conjectural situations, of our ancient feudal and ecclesiastical structures, have been elaborately, and indeed very interestingly described, with all their characteristic distinctions, while the objects comprehended by the term *cottage scenery* have by no means been honored with equal attention; and this, it should

seem, merely because, though of equal excellence in the scale of picturesque beauty, that beauty happens not to be of the *heroic* or sublime order: It seems not to have been sufficiently considered that the landscape-painter's beauty does not necessarily exist in grandeur, *exclusively* or *alone*; but equally pervading *every* department of Nature, is found not less perfect in the most *humble* than in the most *stately* structures, or scenery.

The *poets* indeed appear to have entered more feelingly into this pleasing investigation, and into those more accurate discriminations of *feature*, and of *character*, which we find a want of in the *tourists*: Still, however, even *their* animated descriptions have been too general and monotonous: The *larger* subjects have been treated with the most respectful circumstantiality, while one unvarying and uniform idea has served to describe every *cottage* in the kingdom.

I am, however, by no means *cottage-mad*; and without entering into any idle *competition* between those *major* and *minor* beauties, am content that rural and cottage-scenery shall be considered as no more than a sort of *low-comedy* landscape; and upon that ground venture to present those very imperfect specimens of their amusing varieties, which will be found in the annexed etchings. In the preceding observations, I am far from the presumption of meaning any *reflection* on the *poets*: It is perhaps *their business* to be general:—THOMPSON, SHENSTONE, COOPER, and others, have drawn some of their most spirited sketches from the secluded

village; and MR. KNIGHT's image of a rustic habitation, appears to me to be as beautiful as a general image can be. † And as to the *tourists*, if they have been so negligent as I have presumed to suppose them, my present attempt will have but so much the better claim to the attribute of novelty, and I shall be more indebted to their *negligence*, than I could have been to their *attention*. I come now to the painter:

Of GAINSBOROUGH, it ever must and will be acknowledged that, with all his inattentions, the path he took to fame was unquestionably his own—original and legitimate: He appears to have been the first English master that had courage to quit the dull unvarying routine in rural painting, and from more profound and accurate observations of Nature, to give distinct characteristics and original varieties to his cottagery, and to the furniture and circumstances with which his best works are so eminently enriched: His woodmen, shepherds, dairy-maids, cottage-children, pigs, dogs, fallen timber, leafless stumps, thorny and bramble fences, and other incidents of rural œconomy, have the full merit of originality, both in the selection and in the combination.

† "Nor yet unenvied to whose humbler lot

" Falls the retired antiquated cot:

" It's roof with reeds and mosses cover'd o'er,

" And honey-suckles climbing round the door;

" While mantling vines along it's walls are spread,

" And clust'ring ivy decks the chimney's head."

THE LANDSCAPE; A POEM.

The course of practice pursued by this very eminent and valuable artist, affords an important lesson to the student of painting: His earliest essays, of which I have had the pleasure of examining a great number, appear to have been as exactly *imitative* as possible, and to have been executed with the most careful and laborious precision: The consequence of which was—a rapid advancement to that stile of broad and comprehensive pencilling which distinguish his mature works; in which the full effect of high-finishing is produced by a few broad and simple dashes—an effect which those never can accomplish who *begin* with broad-pencilling, as a principle which they suppose should *precede* practice, and not *follow*, as the *result* of it.

Cottage-scenery may be divided into two classes, namely, the *neat*, and the *neglected*:

It is a maxim that in poverty, nothing will more easily, or more universally excite the attentions of benevolence, than the appearance of neatness and cleanliness: The regular, white-washed or new brick wall—the glaring red chimney-pot—the even-thatch'd roof—the equi-distant groups of sweet pea—and the jasmin prudishly trimmed up into solid columns and cubes, stiff as a chimney, and hiding perhaps some picturesque feature—the square border of flowers planted in exact angles and carefully preserved to deck the church-going damsel on sundays—the oven, exhibiting a smooth unvarying surface of dead plaster, or decked only with a vine pruned into deformity—the bright

yellow foot-path, straight as a line—all tend to impress an idea of frugal propriety, and will be sure to call forth the praises of the good *housewife* and the thrifty *æconomist*: But it is nothing to the artist: *As* good *housewives*, or as thrifty *æconomists* we admit that it is all very well; but we then turn from this neatness and regularity, to what *we* must esteem a far more profitable subject—the neglected fast-ruinating cottage—the patched plaster, of various tints and discolorations, which, like the garments of Otway's witch, shall

“ Seem to speak variety of wretchedness ”

—the weather-beaten thatch, bunchy and varied with moss—the mutilated chimney top—the fissures and crevices of the inclining wall—the roof of various angles and inclinations—the tiles of different hues—the fence of bungling workmanship—the wild unrestrained vine, whose “gadding” branches nearly deprive the chambers of their wonted light—the paper-pasted casement, with here and there a wisp of straw stuffed through a broken pane—the decayed bee-hive and the broken basket—the fragment of a chair or bench —the slatternry of tubs and dishes scattered about the door —the mischievous pranks of ragged children—the intrusion of pigs —and the unrepaired accidents of wind and rain—offer far greater allurements to the painter's eye, than more neat, regular or formal arrangements could possibly have done:

On these ideas, such as they are, I have endeavored to exhibit, in the following etchings, as much variety of subject and effect as the extent of my design, and of my humble abilities, admitted: They are all from Nature, and indeed some of them were etched on the spot; though, notwithstanding the pains I have taken with them, I must beg leave to repeat that I am well aware they may still be charged with many faults.

ON STUDY.

NEATNESS and accuracy of outline are first to be observed: A want of accuracy and propriety in the *lines* of a drawing, may give more offence to the judgment than can be expiated by the utmost diligence and felicity in *filling them up*: The best works of art should be copied with close attention; for it is by attending to the best painters that our taste is equally formed with that of the student in literature who studies the classics: Acquainted with the modes by which the most eminent artists have expressed their conceptions, we view Nature with more delight, and come to perceive more beauties in her, and those more readily, than we possibly can by studying merely on our own individual stock: It is also necessary for us to attend to the best *writers* on the arts; and to this intention, the justly-celebrated "Analysis of beauty," by HOGARTH, appears to me to be the most comprehensive and decisive work that has been produced on the doctrine of *forms*; and the best adapted to the great purpose of distinguishing picturesque beauty from that which is not so, and which consequently is to be always rejected when no particular exigence requires that it should be retained: SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS, who has treated of painting in a more abstract, and therefore, to learners, I apprehend, in a less practical mode

of instruction, calls it "THE ART OF SEEING NATURE"—a phrase which, with equal force and felicity, compresses the whole theory of the science into a single expression; but which cannot be usefully understood, but as it's import results to the mind from the necessary previous details of study and practice.

In selecting from Nature the objects to be depicted in rural landscape, the best advice I can offer is that you retire into the inmost recesses of forests, and most obscure and unfrequented villages: The former will supply the most various models for trees, underwoods, plants and foliage, whether perfect and living, or mutilated and in decay; and the latter, with the simplest and most artless *forms* of houses, bridges, gates, barns, fences, and other rural structures: In such situations too, you will be equally sure of finding the chastest *tints*; and in general the happiest choice and combinations of *natural coloring*: On the remote wild common—on the straggling undetermined borders of the forest—or in the silent sequestered dell, you shall find, unguarded, the richest treasures of picturesque Nature—the antient, feeble, roof-oppressed hovel, fenced with various patches of brick and stone and mud-mix'd wall with quick hedge—stakes and rails, and wreathings composed of the stubborn thorn and the pliant willow, here and there again subdivided, or still more boldly relieved by a bush of smiling May-thorn, or of the luxuriant-shooting alder—with those little creeping, rugged paths, stealing into obscurity beneath the umbrage of the blossomed orchard, or among bunches of alternate furze and briar, fringed with the dock, the thistle and the various-tinted fern;

and trod by the wandering ass, or silent-browsing sheep : Situations like these, afford not only the richest objects and contrasts crouded in luxuriant varieties, but also (which is at least of equal importance) the advantage of that silent serenity in which you may most successfully study and comprehend your objects, indulge your feelings, and effect your purposes.

In the theory of rural scenes, so much is irregularity of parts a constituent of beauty, that it may very nearly be said that *equality is deformity*: Avoid therefore all tame geometrical forms, as of unqualifiedly-straight, circular or angular lines, not absolutely necessary to truth or variety ; and if you find your subject infested by any such, break or evade them by some natural occurrence : Learn betimes to abhor the practice of clipping the noble and graceful elm into the sordid shape of a mop, or a broom ; the fence of sprightly aspiring hawthorn into an absurd *vegetable wall* ; and the solemn yew tree into fantastic imitations of a flower-de-luce, a game cock or a green dragon ! Remember you have nothing to do with these abominations but to despise them.

OF FREEDOMS TO BE TAKEN WITH NATURE.

AS there are but few Scenes of which the precise, entire and unqualified image will form a picture, the picturesque artist is at liberty not only to introduce, or to leave out particular *features*, as a tree, a hog-trough, or a pig-sty—to deck a hovel with honey-suckle—change the shape, or the position of a casement—break stiff and formal lines, or reduce the too great predominancy of any particular object in the piece, but likewise to change the *colors* of his thatch, bricks, wood, or any object or circumstance by which his picture may be filled with greater variety, happier combinations, or more perfect harmony.

With the *topographical* draughtsman, it is, in this respect, totally different: He must copy *every* circumstance exhibited to his view—the very color of his bricks, and the exact shape of his ornaments: He is not at liberty to dispense with an awkward co-incidence of trees, or of chimnies—an improbable door—a senseless monotony of wall—or an eye-fatiguing expanse of roof: Every absurdity, as well as beauty, must be faithfully depicted, or his drawings will not hand down to posterity that *local* and particular truth, which it is expressly his business and purpose to transmit,

OF LIGHT AND SHADE.

THE Effects of light and shade are to be attributed to accidents innumerable; so that every draughtsman may introduce that effect which he thinks most suitable to his purpose; If he has a particularly-beautiful part to describe, his light may strike forcibly upon it: If a deformity—shade, or some better object may be contrived, to keep it in obscurity.

Upon contemplating pictures by the best masters, particularly those by REMBRANDT, I have observed that the principal light is most frequently placed near the middle of the scene; and that above two-thirds of the picture are in shadow: The fine picture called “The Cradle”, now in the collection of Mr. KNIGHT, confirms this remark.

Two distinct, equal lights, should never appear in the same picture: One should be principal, and the rest subordinate, both in dimension and degree: *Unequal* parts and gradations

lead the attention easily from part to part, while parts of *equal* appearance hold it awkwardly *suspended*, as if unable to determine which of those parts is to be considered as the subordinate. "And " to give the utmost force and solidity to your work, some part of " the picture should be as light, and some as dark as possible: " These two extremes are then to be harmonized and reconciled " to each other." *

Analogous to this "Rule of thirds", (if I may be allowed so to call it) I have presumed to think that, in connecting or in breaking the various lines of a picture, it would likewise be a good rule to do it, in general, by a similar scheme of proportion; for example, in a design of landscape, to determine the *sky* at about two-thirds; or else at about one-third, so that the material objects might occupy the other two: Again, two thirds of one element, (as of water) to one third of another element (as of land); and then both together to make but one third of the picture, of which the two other thirds should go for the sky and ærial perspectives— This rule would likewise apply in breaking a length of wall, or any other too great continuation of line that it may be found necessary to break by crossing or hiding it with some other object: In short, in applying this invention, generally speaking, to any other case, whether of light, shade, form, or color, I have found the ratio of about two thirds to one third, or of one to two, a much better and more harmonizing proportion, than the precise formal *half*, the

* REYNOLDS'S Annot. on Du Fresnoy.

too-far-extending *four-fifths*—and, in short, than any other proportion whatever. I should think myself honored by the opinion of any gentleman on this point ; but until I shall be better informed, shall conclude this general proportion of two and one to be the most picturesque medium in all cases of breaking or otherwise qualifying straight lines and masses and groupings, as Hogarth's line is agreed to be the most beautiful, (or, in other words, the most picturesque) medium of *curves*.

too far extending from the middle, and, in fact, than any other proportion. I should think myself justified in the opinion of any gentleman on this point; but until I shall be better informed, I shall conclude this general proportion of two and one to be the most pictorial medium in all cases. **OF COLORING.** straight lines and masses and groups, as Hogarth's line is agreed to be the most beautiful, (or, in other words, the most pictorial) medium of colour.

EVERY painter knows that a glare of *white* hurts his eyes while he is painting; and indeed the common observer perceives that *snow* is more or less painful to his sight, when he first gets into it; And all bright metals and polished bodies which reflect the sun's image the most perfectly, are likewise more or less painful to look at: So that even from these observations, remote as they seem from the subject, we may infer the impropriety of high glaring colors, and of sudden and unqualified sparkles of light, in painting; such as we have frequently occasion to regret in the elegant productions of PYNAKER.

It is related of Mr. WHISTON, that while he was at Cambridge in 1686; his eyes had been weakened by inadvertently reading much in a room newly whitened, and which happened to be much exposed to the direct influence of the sun; but that by covering this white surface with *green* cloth, he soon recovered his former tone of sight: That green is the most cheering and salutary color to the eye, is well known, not only upon the common consideration that the

Creator (of his usual beneficence) has every where inserted it to meet the most natural and usual direction of the eye, but likewise from the sensible *experience* of all eyes, especially weak ones: The shades or degrees of this color, as it is distributed in nature, are innumerable; and considering that it's genus bears so large a proportion to the other colors (which nature seems to have devised and distributed rather for the occasional *diversion* of our sight than for its constant *exercise*) ought to be diligently studied and imitated in the manual practice.

The beauty of a painting undoubtedly consists much in the beauty of its coloring; and that, as I have endeavored to assert, cannot consist in *violent* contrasts, or in sudden sparks and eruptions (as one may call them) of bright and unqualified masses. Why do painters observe a rule in setting their *pallet*? The origin of the practice was not merely arbitrary: It is founded in the Science of their art: They know that the color of every object in Nature is to be painted as partaking more or less of the color of the objects to which it stands exposed; and the convenient order of the gradations in which the colors are laid on the pallet, is but the pattern or rudiment of that chromatic gradation and harmony intended in the picture.

Of the mechanic of colors, and of their different qualities and powers in application to painting, the most intelligent and satisfactory account that I know, is given in a late work (attributed to Mr. CHARLES GOWER, of Oriel college) intitled "*A practical treatise on painting in oil colors*"—printed for B. and J. White, Fleet-street.

OF PERSPECTIVE.

ON this head—the ultimate attainment in drawing being to give a faithful and accurate resemblance of the object, it is sufficient to the scheme of this work to say, that I humbly think the mensuration of the objects to be painted, or of the relative proportions of their distances one from another, and of one part of them from another, will be more successfully attained by diligent and continued *observation* of the objects themselves, and by *comparing* them with your drawings, and attempts to imitate them, than by *technical geometry*: It was very nearly the saying of some eminent master, that “the painter’s geometry should be in his eye:” However, since both the eye and every other faculty, are so materially different in different persons, recourse may certainly be had to the books which aim to facilitate this branch of the art by geometric rules, by those who are disposed to study them; or who find they cannot acquire the proposed habit of *accuracy*, by *observation*: I have read many of these books; but that which, in my opinion, has treated technical perspective with the most intelligence and perspicuity, is the work of DANIEL FOURNIER a painter—a very ingenious man; but whose other necessary avocations (of *cook*, and *shoemaker*

and I know not what besides) having unhappily hindered his progress in literature, he has not always *expressed* his precepts accurately: His *meaning*, however, is not often difficult to understand: He writes with force, and has an easy aptitude of ideas; and the diagrams and examples by which his precepts are illustrated, are, to the best of my knowledge and taste, original and amusing.

ORIGINAL ETCHERS OF RURAL SCENERY.

THE most eminent artists of this description, I believe, are JOHN BOTH, EVERDINGEN, KOBELL, REMBRANDT, RUYSDAEL, SWANEVELDT, WEIROTTER, and WATERLOO; and the grand landscapes of CLAUDE, RUBENS, and POUSSIN, may be perused with equal profit for comprehensive *effect*—a principle which attaches as necessarily to the lowest, as to the highest orders of painting. Those of my readers who enjoy the blessing of an affectionate parent, and a sincere friend, in an honest and worthy man, will here indulge me, I hope, in paying some little tribute of *filial* gratitude: The best specimens of prints by the masters above-named, that have come to my knowledge, are in that very large collection possessed by my father, MR. NATHANIEL SMITH, Print-seller, in May's Buildings—a collection which, having been made by one so eminent both as an artist and sculptor, and of so extensive knowledge and experience in the graphic arts, is probably the most considerable one in London.

OF CONNECTING OBJECTS, AND SELECTING THOSE ONLY
WHICH SHALL BE SUITABLE TO THEIR STATIONS.

SHOULD we see a lady richly dressed, in the act of hoeing turnips, or carrying a load of fish, we should certainly be intitled to an excuse for wondering and being puzzled at the phenomenon: But seeing the same elegant object at a cottage-door, benevolently engaged in advising, consoling, or assisting a distressed family, we should instantly perceive a propriety of action, and a probable combination of circumstances; and the expanding heart would be hurried into a train of grateful ideas, before a thought could be bestowed on the mechanism by which it was effected.

Nothing perhaps claims a greater share of attention from the artist than *propriety of place*: In this particular, the Dutch masters, though not alone, have probably been the most eminent offenders: It has been objected to a picture *said* to have been painted by a most illustrious master, and representing Christ and the disciples at Emaus, that the personages are seated in an elegant arbor, in circumstances of the highest luxury; and at the moment of our Lord's breaking the bread,

a dog and cat are exhibited in the middle of the foreground, *fighting for a bone*—An incident so extremely sordid and contemptible, that I should be very willing to believe those writers misinformed who have attributed this performance to the divine RAPHAEL: Had MR. WEST suffered such an indecorum to disgrace his noble picture of the last supper, in Windsor-chapel, the outrages he has sustained from some violent critics, would have been justly merited.

To this head—of suiting every object to its place and circumstances—I must beg leave to be indulged in referring to a picture of the supposed circumstances of the death of CHATTERTON,† painted by Mr. CRANCH under the very uncommon predicament of having *taught himself* the art of painting in oil, after he was thirty six years of age: In this curious and interesting little piece, designed to represent an event, which will be lamented while there is any sense of excellence, or any feeling of pity, in the heart of man, every object and incident is cautiously excluded which bears the least semblance of ease or consolation, or which has the least tendency to divert mental pain, while every image of misery is combined to awaken sympathy and point regret—A wretched garret—bare and ragged walls—a patched casement—the “beggarly account of empty boxes”—scattered fragments of literature—mean and rent garments—the

† In the possession of SIR JAMES WINTER LAKE, BART. at his seat at Edmonton; who has been pleased to honor it with particular notice.

miserable flock bed—the horrid indications of poison—and every symptom of despair! Perhaps the image of youthful genius, hurried on to misery by a proud consciousness of its own powers and claims on the world, and struggling it's last under the combined tortures of oppression, and of the most violent bodily pain, could not have been more forcibly or feelingly expressed: It was remarked to me by an ingenious gentleman, that the *chilly coloring* of this picture was happily appropriate to the sentiments suggested by the subject. I knew nothing of this artist, 'till the merit and circumstances of his original essay induced me to seek a friendship which I shall ever hold it an honor to retain.

Having had the foregoing occasion to mention CHATTERTON, I am sorry to observe that the public has lately been imposed upon in a very unwarrantable and audacious manner, by an ugly goggle-ey'd portrait, prefix'd to some periodical publication, and asserted to be a likeness of THOMAS CHATTERTON, by the very persons who have confessed it to be a mere fabrication, and (for any thing that is now known) destitute of any resemblance whatever.

I now proceed to communicate a few other facts which I hope may not be unacceptable to the collectors of prints.

The printsellers exhibited, for sometime, a portrait of a Mr. POND: The booksellers, who were publishing a spurious edition of PETER PINDAR's works, thought this a fit opportunity to prefix to that edition, this very indential head of Mr. POND, as the true effigy of—"the satyrist of the age!"

A few hours after DE LA MOTTE, the french spy, was executed, a portrait of him was etched and published, which sold very rapidly: When Mr. HACKMAN was executed for the murder of Miss RAY, the accommodating artist of DE LA MOTTE, clapp'd on a black patch to the forehead of his hero; and without further ceremony, dished up to the public, a french spy, for an unhappy englishman—the lover and destroyer of Miss RAY!

I am informed of another portrait print of an eminent *Yorkshire Clothier*, that, after having seen considerable *service* under the title of GENERAL PUTNAM, and (since) as an American Secretary at war, by the name of GENERAL KNOX, has at present the honor of representing his excellency GEORGE WASHINGTON!

The operation of extracting three generals, and a secretary at war, out of one Yorkshire clothier, is so extraordinary, if true, that I shall undoubtedly be excused from giving any more examples of this species of graphic *æconomy*.

The nickname of POT as the engraver of a plate of the portrait of Miss BALDWIN, after a picture painted by Mr. KETTLE, was occasioned by an altercation between the painter and the engraver—the former insisting that the name of KETTLE should not

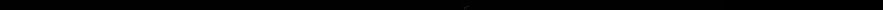
stand with that of *HOUSTON*, who thereupon (humorously enough) substituted the fictitious name of *Pot* opposite to that of *Kettle*, in allusion to the vulgar proverb.*

Those Prints in *BROMLEY*'s work, which are distinguished by the signature of *Paul*, were etched by the ingenious Mr. *SAMUEL DE WILDE*, from drawings copied by him from his Majesty's *Clarendon*, for the late earl of *BUTE*: The artist, being then young, was diffident of giving his own name to the public, and therefore authorized the publisher to put any name he thought proper: In *SIR JAMES LAKE*'s valuable collection of english portraits, are many of these drawings by *DE WILDE*, which have never been engraved.

* From the information of *MR. CHARLES PHILLIPS*, Engraver of the charming print of *Tycho* fighting the evil-spirits, from a picture by *De Loutherbourg*.

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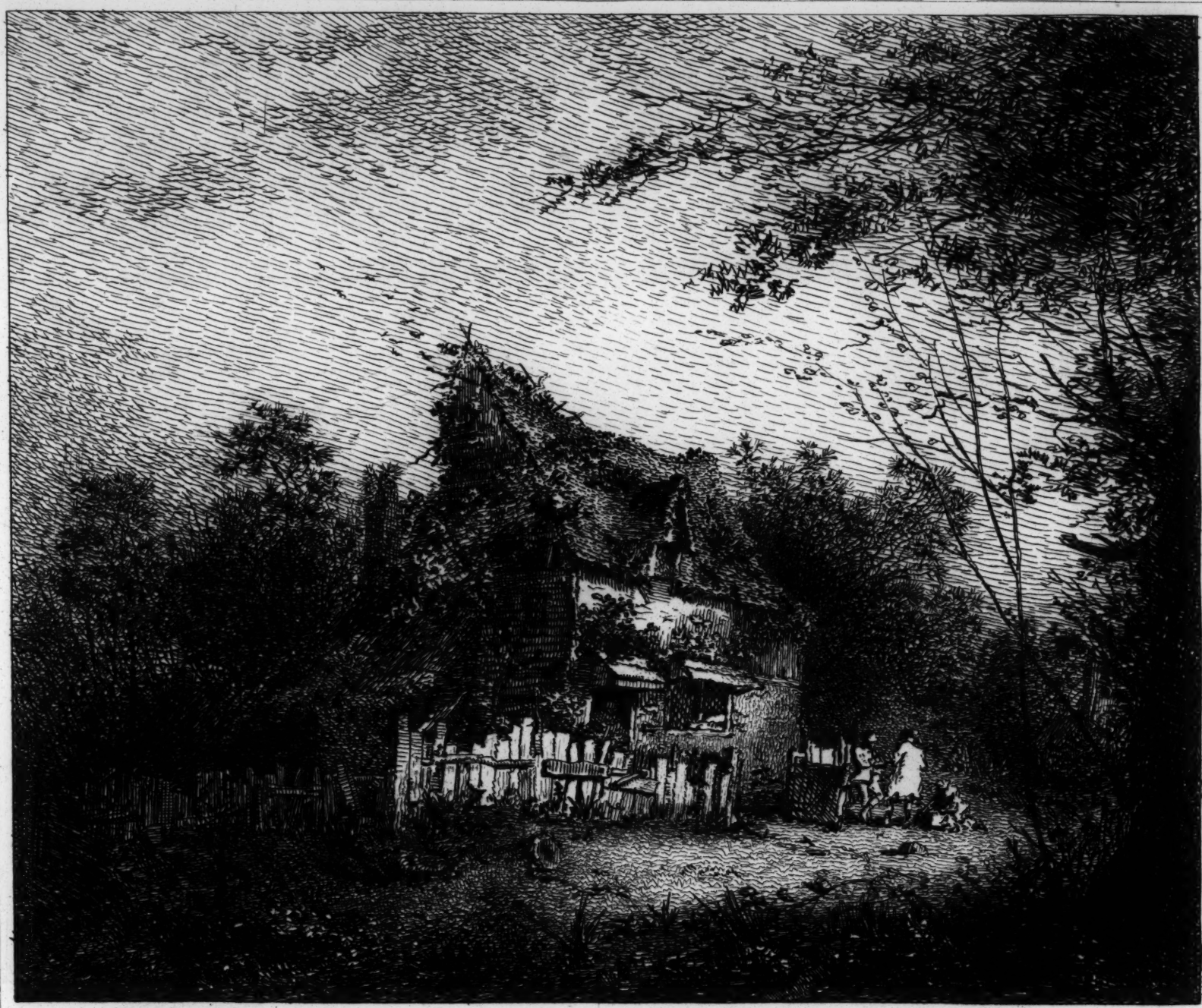
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near EDMONTON CHURCH.

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ON MERROW COMMON, SURREY.

The residence of Dame Battery, aged 102.

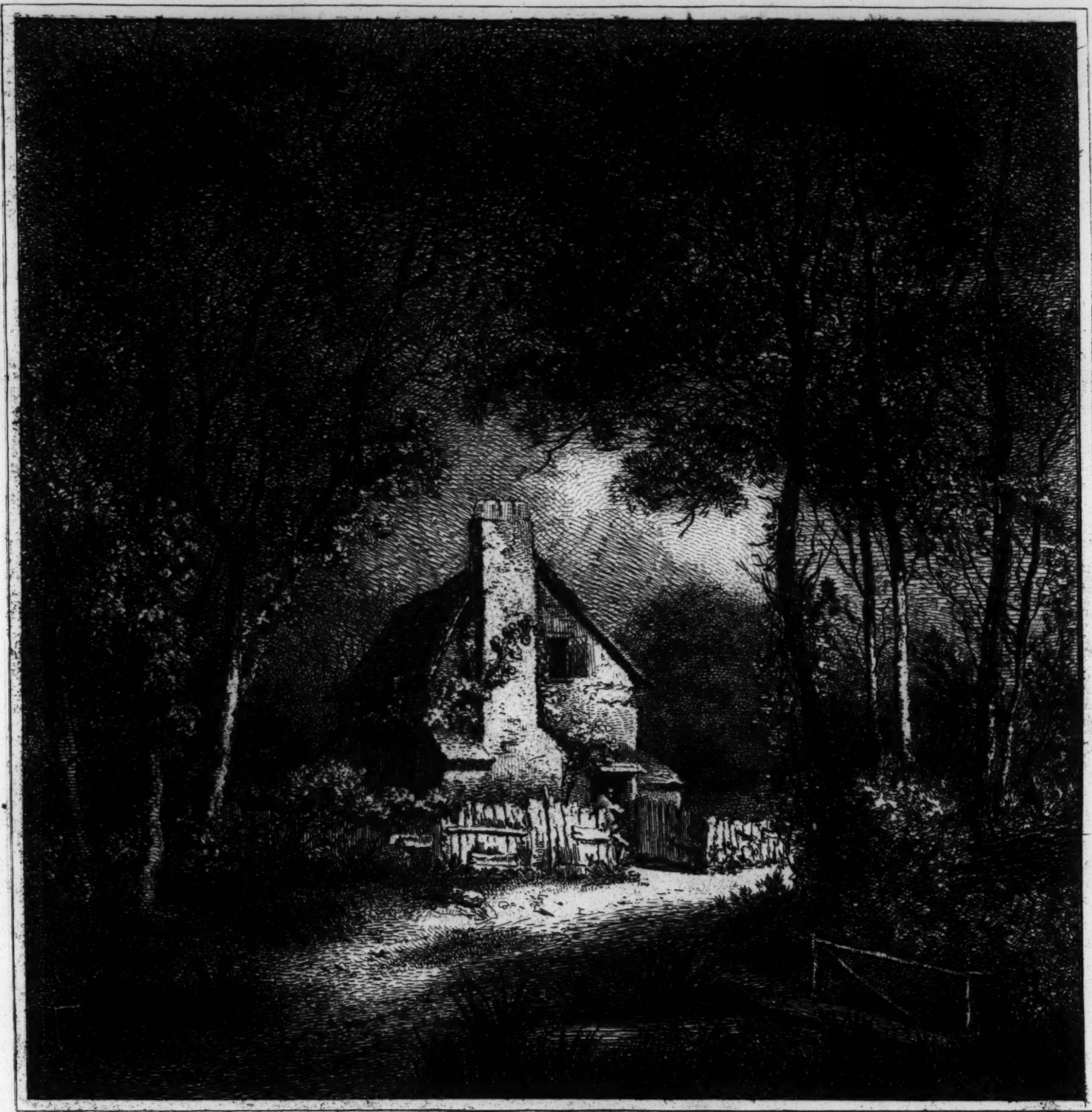
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AT CLANDON, SURREY.

Formerly the residence of John Woolderidge, the Clandon Poet.

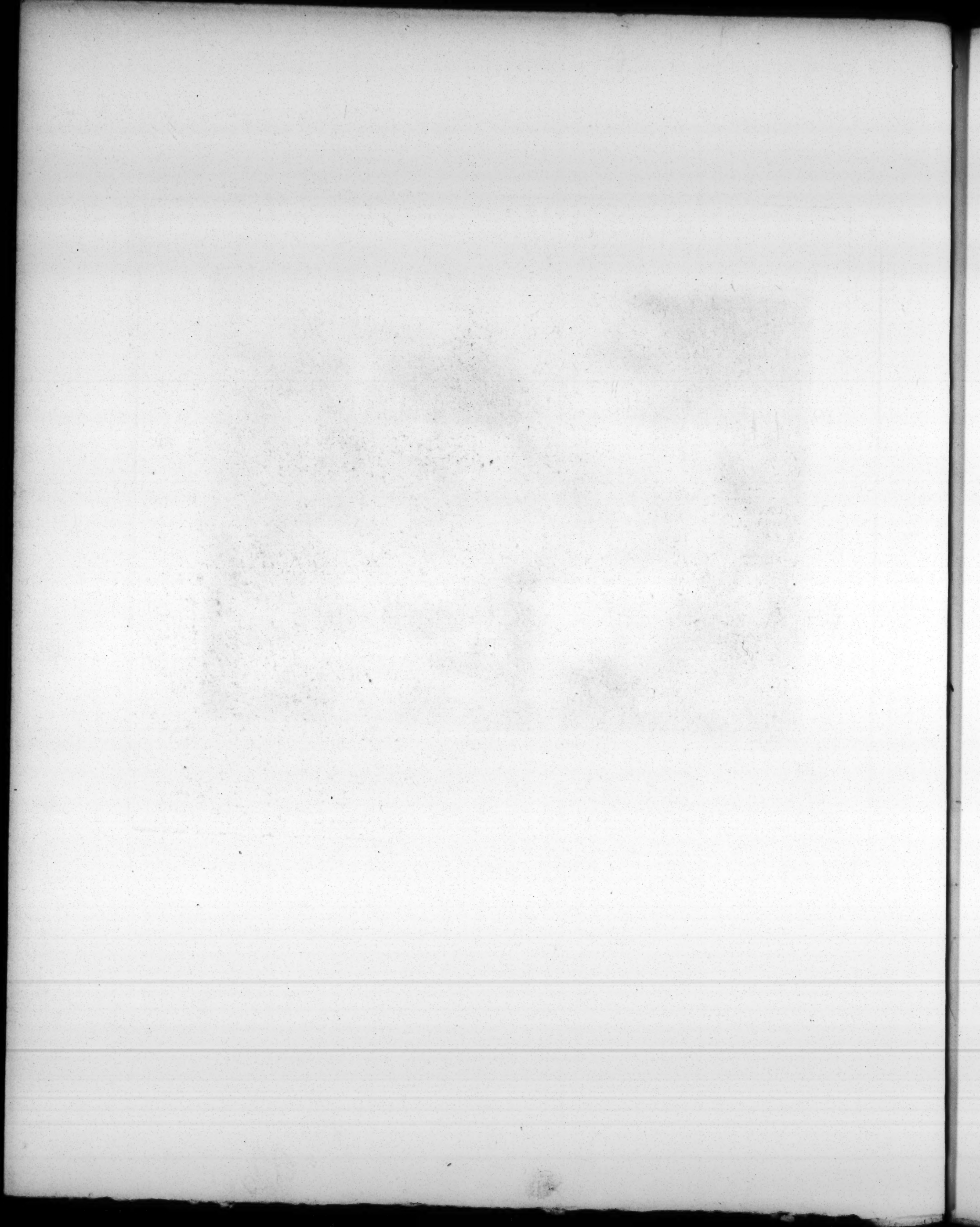
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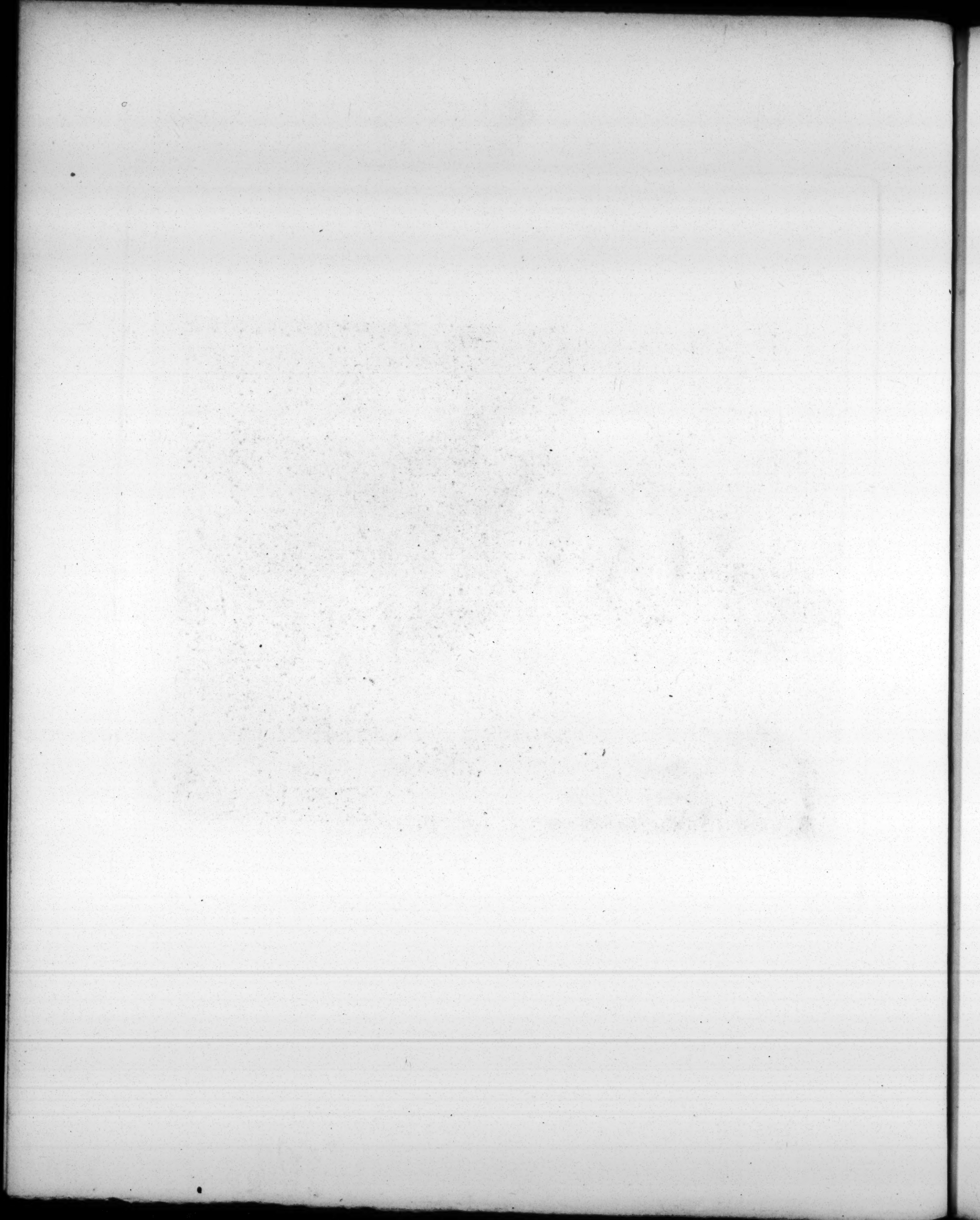




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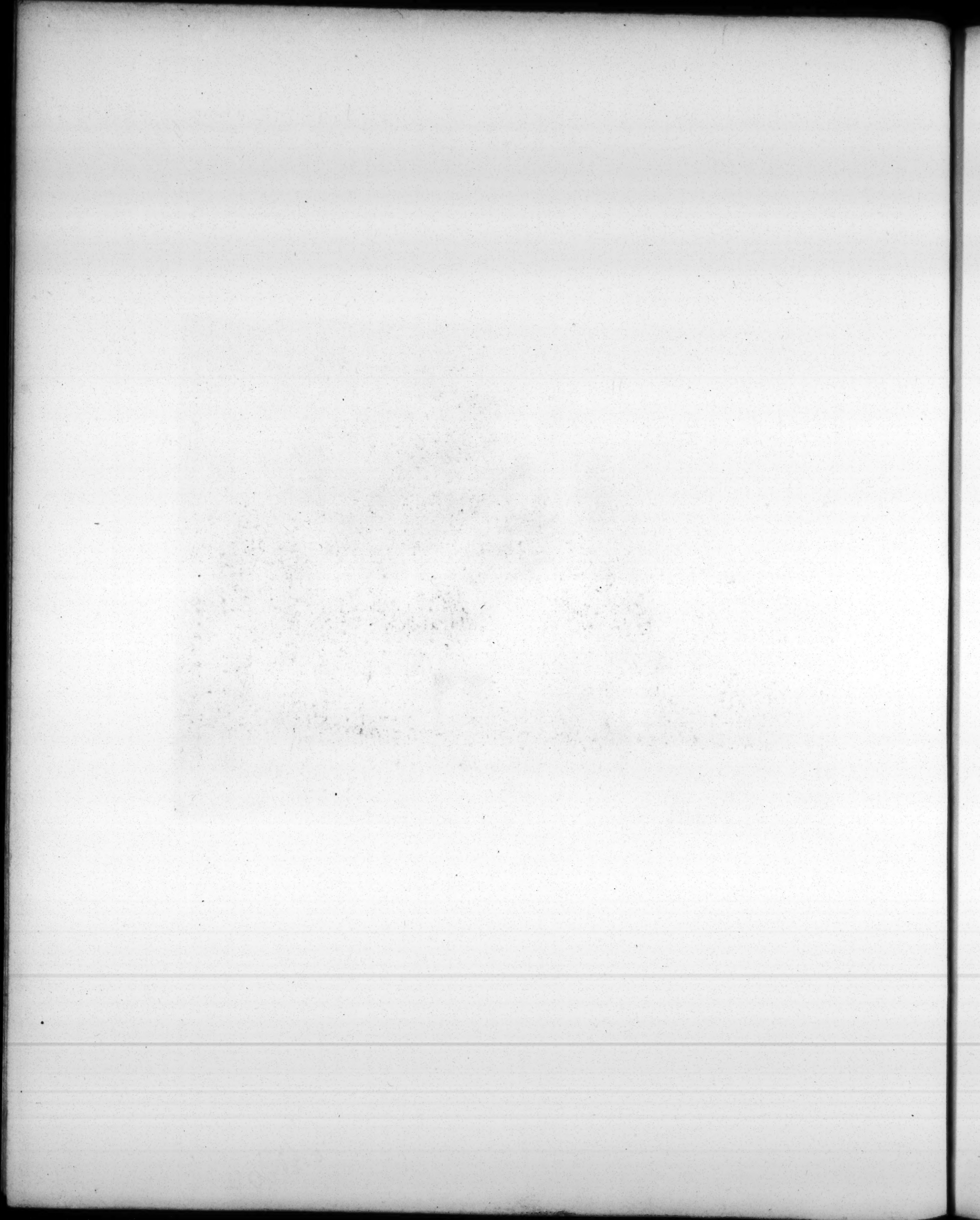


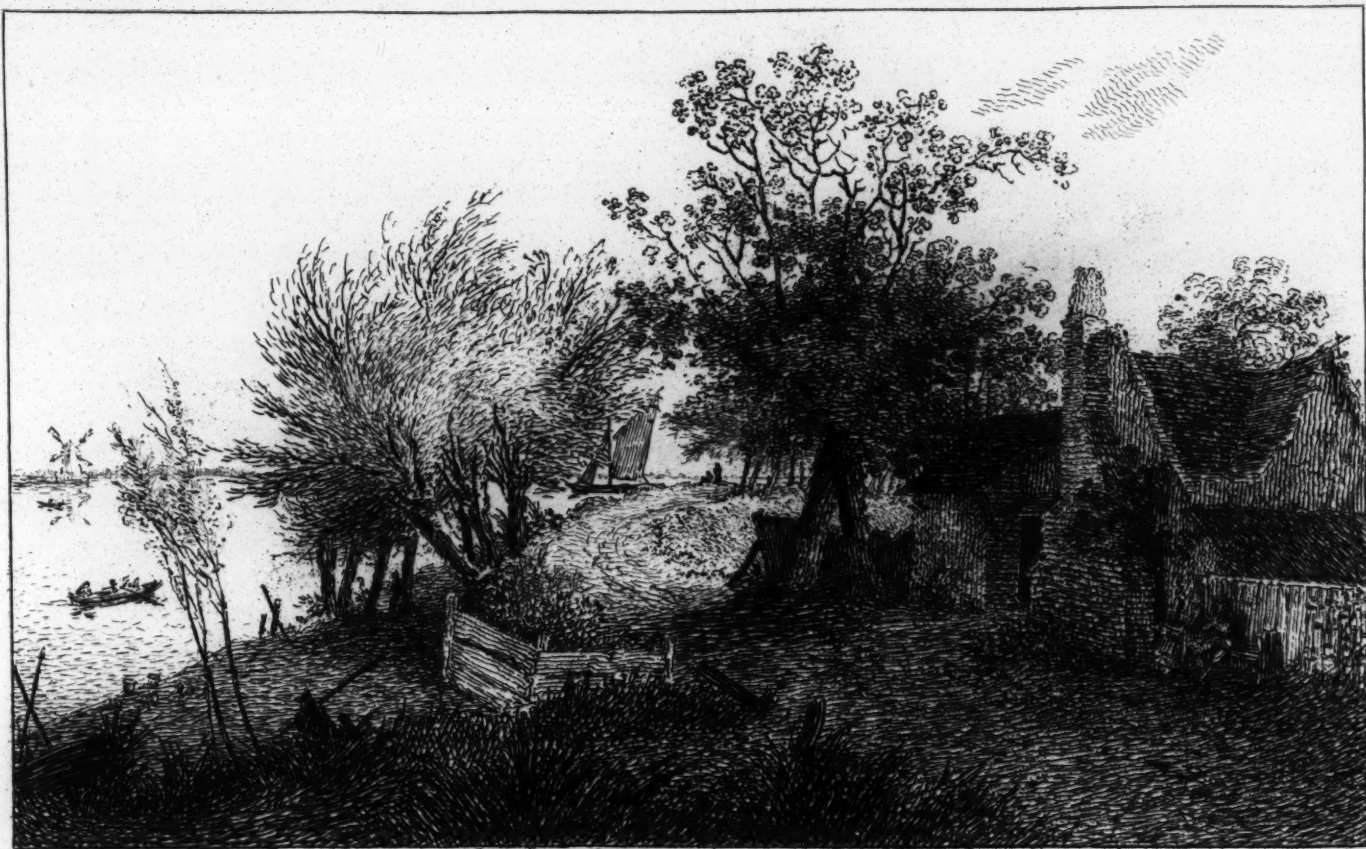


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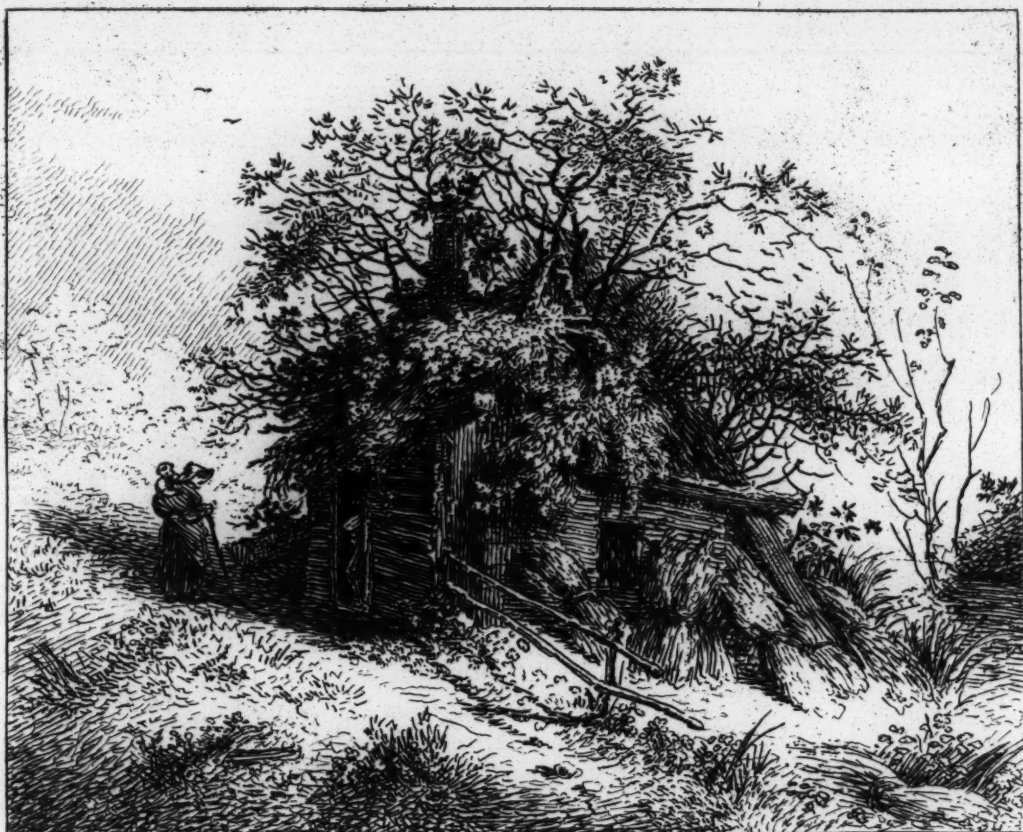


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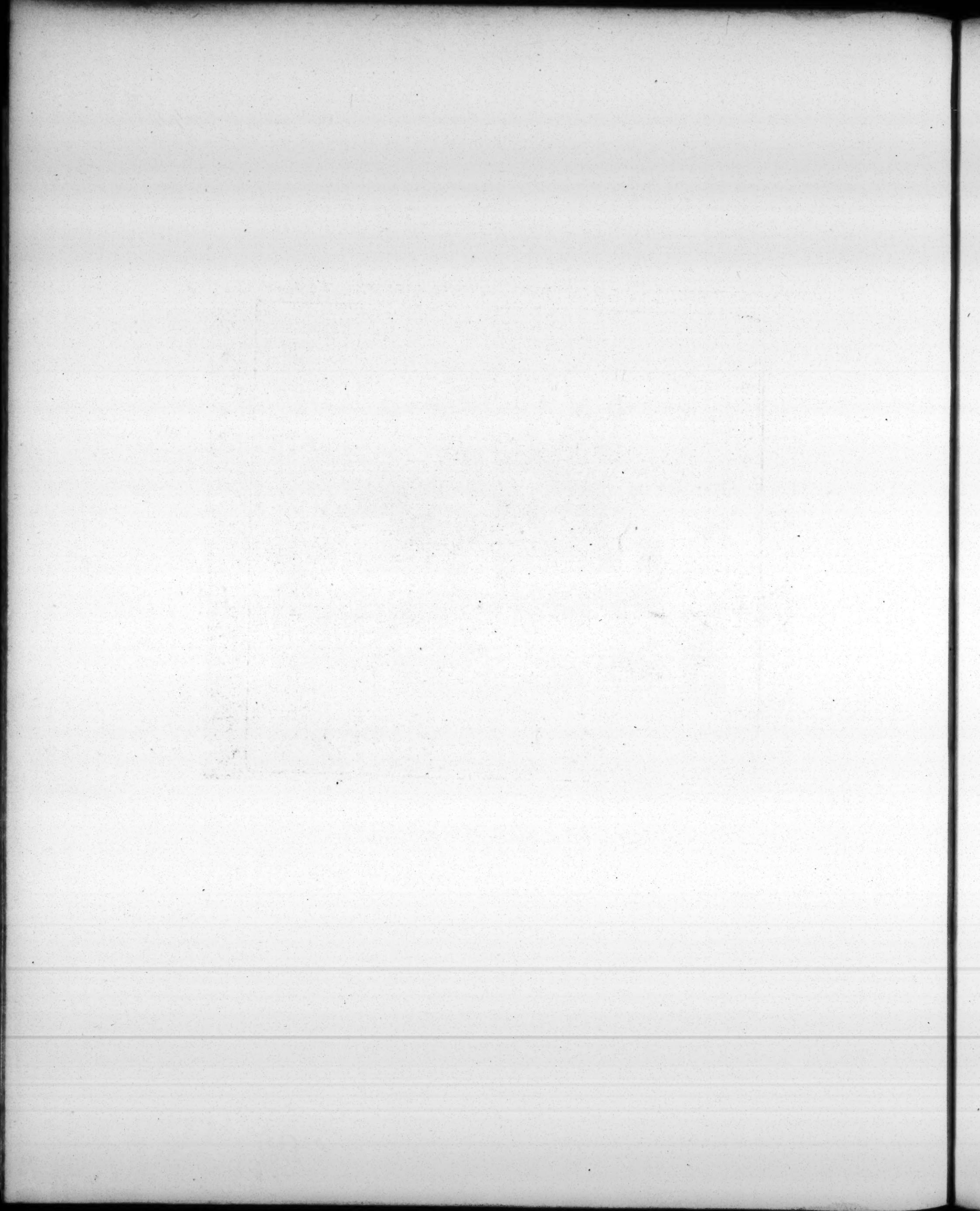




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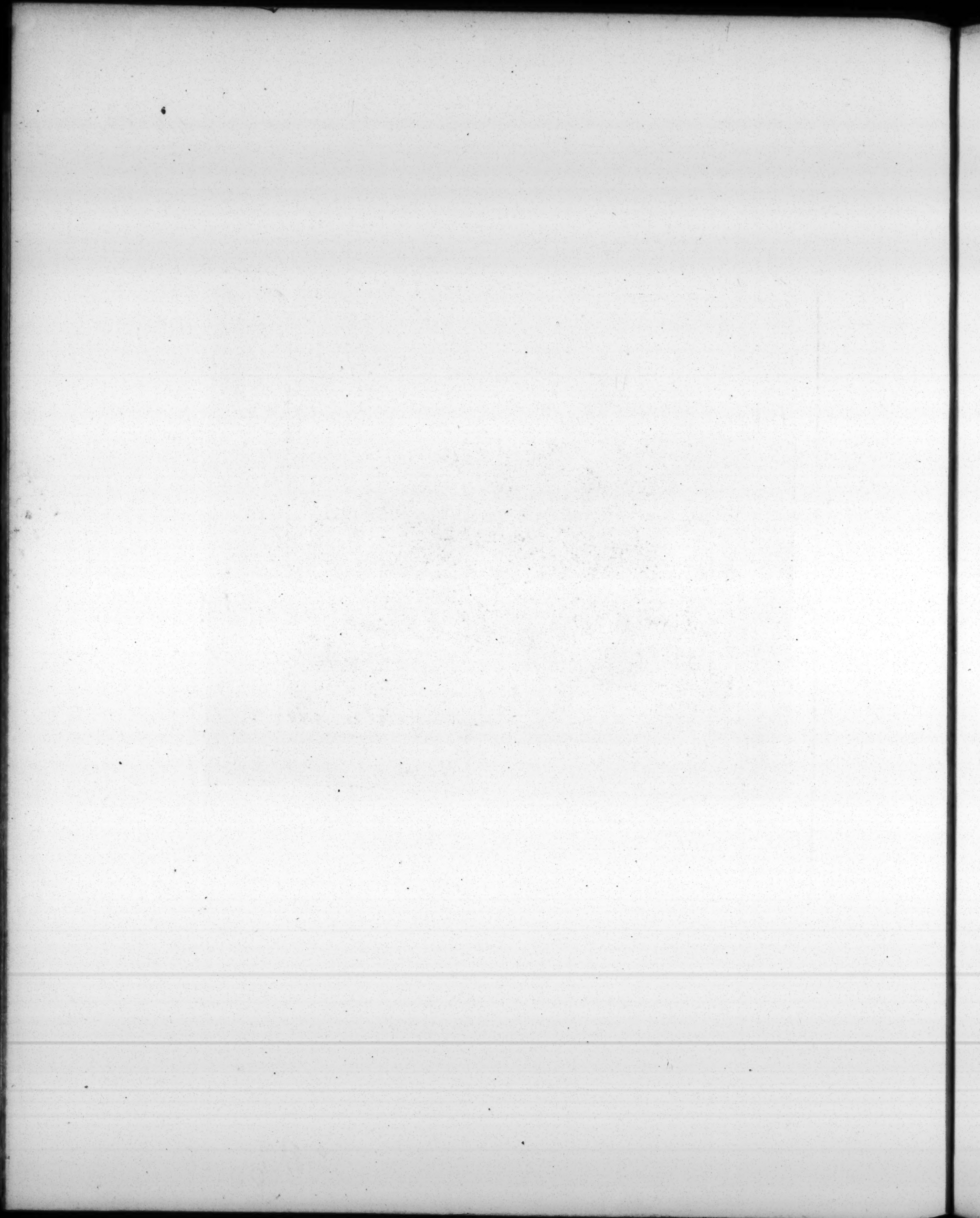


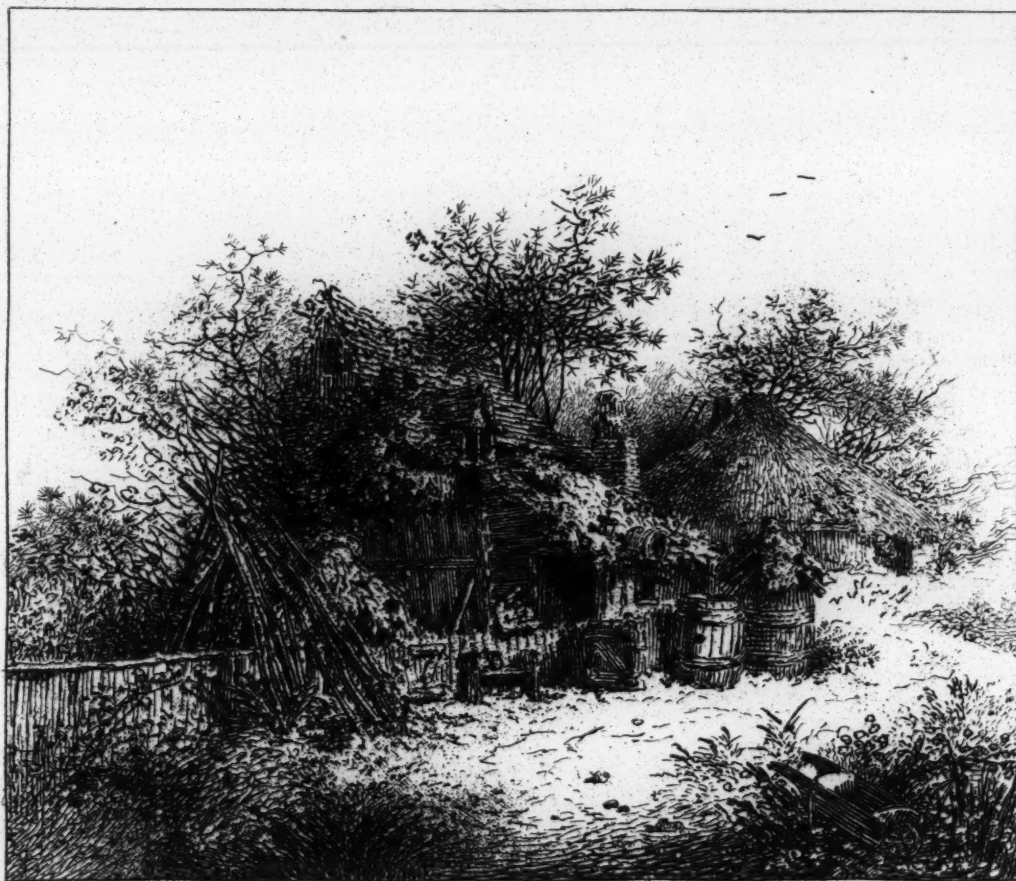


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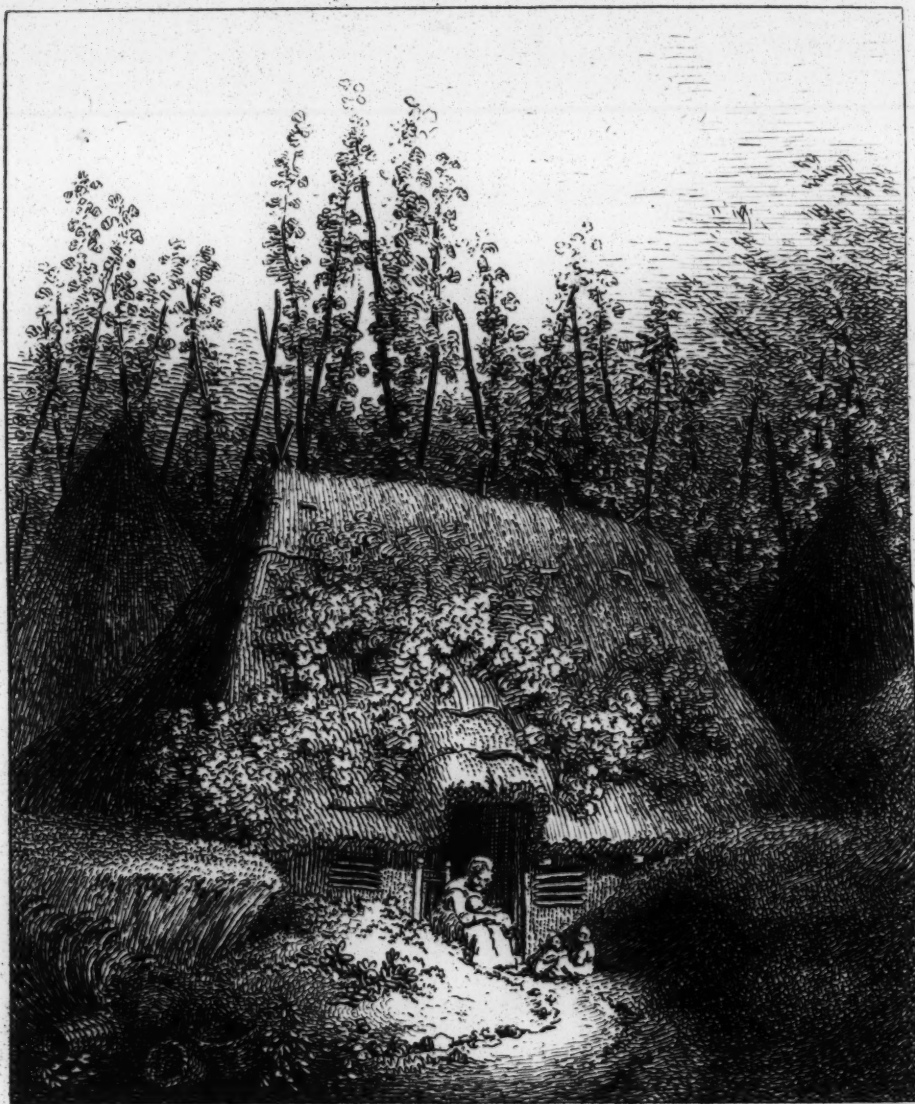
ON SCOTLAND GREEN, PONDER'S-END.

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LADY PLOMER'S PALACE, on the summit of HAWKE'S BILL WOOD, EPPING FOREST. *Drawn & engraved by J.T. Smith, Engraver of the antiquaries of London & environs.*

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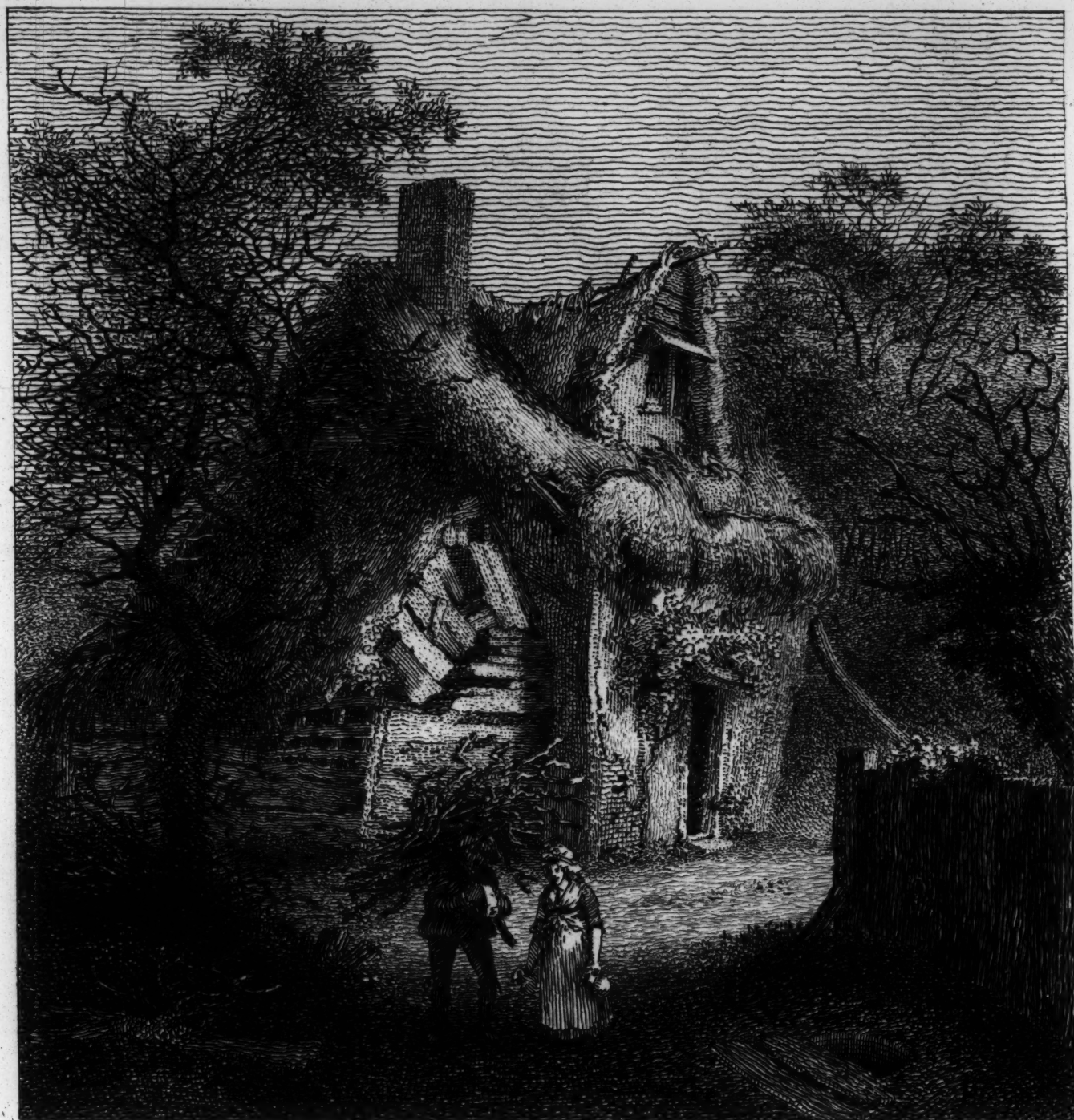
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